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# Moscow's Andropov viewed by man who saw ascendancy

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Last February, an ex-Soviet diplomat named Vladimir Sakharov began telling American reporters that 68-year-old Yuri Andropov seemed destined to succeed Leonid Brezhnev as general secretary of the Communist Party.

Sakharov, a former CIA informer who defected to the United States in 1971, also predicted that Andropov would resign from his post as director of the Soviet intelligence organization, the KGB, in order to position himself for Brezhnev's job.

After Andropov resigned his post in May, many Western analysts continued to scoff at Sakharov's claim that Andropov was the most likely choice for Brezhnev's job. They said the Communist Party still associated the KGB with the bloody purges of the Stalin era, that choosing Andropov would be political suicide.

"When he was put in charge of the KGB, Andropov was perceived as a party apparatchik, not as a KGB figure. He was the party person to straighten out the KGB and bring it under the Central Committee's control," Sakharov said recently during a phone interview from his Los Angeles home.

Sakharov, who grew up as a member of the Moscow elite in the 1950s and 1960s, says that Andropov's 15-year internal cleanup program transformed the KGB into a respectable part of the Soviet leadership system. He also says that, among his Soviet baby boom contemporaries, Stalin is not perceived as such a bad guy.

Sakharov's 1980 book, "High Treason," tells of his childhood and his five-year career as a Russian diplomat/agent in North Yemen, Egypt and Kuwait. During that time, Sakharov's disillusionment with the Soviet system caused him to provide the CIA with details of his routine intelligence work. But some of his most fascinating stories concern the social dynamics of the Moscow elite, the privileged class of intelligence officers, party officials and top professionals who rule the Soviet Union.

As a member of this exclusive clique, Sakharov went to the right schools and met the right people. In fact, he first met Andropov's son, Igor, 20 years ago. They were 17-year-old students taking the entrance exam for the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, the nation's most prestigious university. Each year, the institute accepts 60 students—usually members of the Moscow elite—to prepare them for careers as diplomats.

"Igor was special even then," Sakharov recalls. "He was destined to go into the institute's American-study group. At that time, it was impossible to get into; they only accepted three students a year. He was smart enough to get enrolled in the institute, but the pull of his family became the most important thing after that."

The year Igor took his exam, his father had completed his ambassadorship to Hungary and was overseeing the Central Committee's department for relations with socialist bloc countries.

"At that time, Igor was a very shy individual. Not a joiner," says Sakharov. "He stuck to himself. He was also absolutely harmless. He did not belong to the system of informers, of *stukachi*, in our class. He seemed most interested in the study of American culture. So was I. So we exchanged records and books."

Sakharov met Yuri Andropov only once, at a party Igor gave at his father's Moscow apartment. It was a typical teen gathering, Moscow elite-style.

"It was 1963. We were all about 18. We drank a lot and listened to Western decadent music—a Chubby Checkers record. I remember we were doing the Twist. The party lasted about five hours, then Igor told us to leave because his father was coming back. So we were just running out as he was coming in and he was quite pleasant. They were a pretty solid, decent family as far as I knew.

"There was a sister, too, I think. Older. But Igor was the hope of the family. Still, in the Soviet Union, the son is supposed to be the one to make it in life and the woman doesn't count."

At present, Igor is a member of the Soviet delegation at the 35-nation European Security Conference in Spain; his older sister Irina is married to Alexander Filipov, an actor who has performed in avant-garde productions in Moscow. Yuri Andropov is a widower.

Sakharov remembers Andropov's apartment as containing forbidden luxuries common to other households of the Moscow elite: Scandinavian furniture, books in English by Somerset Maugham and John Steinbeck, a stereo, Western liquor and records by Glenn Miller, Dave Brubeck, Frank Sinatra and Peggy Lee.

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"Then, in 1965, something happened. Igor was sick. We all thought he had ulcers. He took a six-month leave of absence from school. Then we find out there is a big cleanup going on at the KGB. Hundreds were being fired on the spot. The students got very paranoid about plans of going into the KGB. Some of their fathers got canned. Then we found that Andropov was becoming the head of the KGB.

"Come 1966, Igor is back at school. And he is a changed man. He is not as social as he used to be, there is an aura of superiority about him. We know that his father is becoming a big shot, so we minded our own business."

A year later, Andropov officially assumed the leadership of the KGB.

Sakharov says the KGB agents he knew in the late 1960s perceived Andropov as a good administrator who delegated a lot of authority.

"I've heard a lot of experts in this country saying that he is ruthless, hard-driving, oppressive. This comes from the same people who said that there is no way Andropov would come to power. I'm sick and tired of hearing these doom and gloom prophecies."

Sakharov believes the United States should initiate a summit meeting between Ronald Reagan and Andropov so that the men can discuss a broad range of world issues, particularly nuclear disarmament.

Next, he would like to see extended conferences between Soviet and American business leaders. Then, he would like the two nations to establish a trilateral relationship with China.

Sakharov believes Soviet and American leaders should be working together to address world hunger and other threats to global stability. He also thinks the United States should reconsider its policies toward Third World countries.

"Andropov is tops at dealing with Third World countries," he says. "When he got to the KGB, its biggest problem was its Third World operations. So Andropov gave instructions to produce many more Third World experts. He has selected the best nucleus of operatives. He has developed the Soviet Union's eyes into the Third World. Under him, the Soviet Union will have better relations."

Sakharov also predicts that KGB operations in the United States will become more sophisticated.

"One of Andropov's greatest achievements was legitimizing Soviet intelligence. Internally, he glorified it to the people. Externally, he made it more efficient. He has also been able to do everything in a very low-key manner. He is intelligent, far more than Brezhnev.

"Despite his age, he is a product of the new generation of Soviet leaders who are a little more outward-oriented. They understand that solving their internal economic problems depends on world stability and their good relations with other countries."

Some Soviet analysts think that, due to his age, Andropov could be a transitional leader. Most top Soviet officials are in their 60s and 70s. Within the next decade, thousands of younger administrators, about whom Westerners know very little, will begin to replace them.

One of the people moving up through the ranks is 37-year-old Igor Andropov.

"Yuri Andropov attributes all his success to the Communist Party system and to his own intellectual ability to manipulate it," Sakharov says. "His loyalty to the party is impeccable. He won't want to rock the boat because he wants his son to succeed him. In the Soviet Union, the son follows the footsteps of his father. Igor is already working for one of his father's best friends, Georgi Arbatov, the director of the United States and Canada Institute."

In the 1960s, Andropov made Arbatov his chief adviser in the KGB. Arbatov also was recognized as one of the intellectual architects of detente. Some experts say he now may become the equivalent of Andropov's national security adviser.

Sakharov believes Andropov's first concern is to improve the Soviet economy.

"You'll hear a lot of Soviet rhetoric, but quietly he's going to work to secure loans, products and lucrative deals with Westerners.

"Deep inside, Andropov is very receptive to jazz, provocative books and things that make people happy, things like color televisions and washing machines. He would like to see the Russian people have them. And he understands that the Soviet Union cannot go too long without having the standard of living improve."

But that doesn't mean Andropov has any sympathies with Western ideology, Sakharov says, adding that Andropov may merely see the shortcomings of Soviet society more clearly than did his less sophisticated predecessor.

Since Sakharov became an American citizen and received his doctorate in international relations, he has made a career of lecturing to corporations and political clubs on topics ranging from Soviet plans for the Middle East to methods of Soviet intelligence training. Many of his predictions have appeared in HUMINT, an intelligence newsletter designed for multinational corporations.